

# The Auburn Circle





# *Taylor's Bakery & Gourmet Coffee*

*132 North College St.  
502-1112*



Thank you for making our  
first year a **HUGE**  
success!

Normal Hours of Operation

Sat, Sun, Mon, 7am - 2pm

Tue, Wed, Thurs, 7am - 7pm

Abnormal Hours

Sat thru Thurs, 8:30pm - 12:30am



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**The Auburn Circle  
Publications Suite, Foy Union Bldg.  
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## submissions

The Auburn Circle accepts works from students, staff and alumni of Auburn University. Prose, poetry, essays and articles should be typed. The Auburn Circle has access to IBM and Macintosh computers. It is preferred that art work be submitted on slides, but originals of any size are accepted. Original copies of photographs are required for submission. All submissions become property of The Auburn Circle on a one time printing basis, with reserved rights for possible reprinting of material at a later date. The Auburn Circle is located in the Publications suite, basement of Foy Union. For more information call 844-4122.



Recently, I had a falling out. Actually, it was more of a falling off. I was relaxing at the lake with friends over a few bottles of wine. We were on a porch overlooking Lake Martin and 15 feet immediately above a few rocks, stones really. And you have to understand that while I might have been a wee little intoxicated, that is not the reason I did a face first dive of the porch. It was just an accident. Well, anyway I am fine, thanks for asking. I bounced right up on to my feet with a few scrapes, but nothing was broken. The coolest part, besides the fact I survived, was that for a few days I was sporting a mild black eye.

The point of my telling this story is that I thought it was funny how the story took on a life of it's own. Pretty soon I was telling people I was wounded in a bar fight defending the honor of a woman. I like my version. The friends I was with like to add a few feet to the fall and will tell you I was... relieving myself when I fell. It's not true! But isn't it funny how the truth can take different turns.

In an abstract kind of way, this has to do with the works published here. The point simply is that we must be careful when interpreting a story or a work of art. I just wanted to remind our readers of this when perusing our magazine. Although you might not like a poem or think a picture is to your liking, perhaps you have been influenced to think you don't like something when if you give it a chance, you really do.

So let me just say thanks to everyone who helped me to make the best three Circles this University has ever seen. I am now forever a historical part of an Auburn Tradition.

Stephen Shows  
Editor, The Auburn Circle  
1997-1998

Special thanks to **Sharon Lewis** for the WONDERFUL watercolor painting she provided for the cover of this issue of The Auburn Circle.



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# efficiency benefits

by Jason Nix

I.

Walk through this? No!  
Absolutely not!  
We can't have that at all.  
Briars, weeds, and grass,  
Always the grass.  
All gets in the way; it does.  
Have food to get to, we.  
There's a patch of blackberries.  
Half a mile or so down this mountain.  
You go down into a valley and up a hill on the other side.  
Nice walk if not for this awful mess -- of briars and such.  
Worth it to, sweet blackberries -- juicy.  
Clear out! Clear out, faster path!  
Bears eat those berries, I hear.  
Coyotes maybe -- faster still.  
Only so much for us; you know.  
Briars gone! Weeds! This goddamned grass!  
Always the grass.

II.

Gravel. That's what we really need; you know.  
This goddamned trail washes out, has ruts in it.  
Car keeps getting stuck.  
Broke a spoke once in the strain of it all.  
These cars are great, but what good are they  
If they don't get you where you need to be.  
Still better off than with those goddamned horses.  
Cars we have con-trol over.  
Let's widen out this road, while we're at it.  
Make it so two cars can pass without slowing down.  
Have to get a run at that hill down the valley.  
Widen it out about half a mile down the road.  
Nothin' but a blackberry patch and some grass around there.  
Always the grass.  
We'll get rid of all that nonsense and make the road better.  
Need to get to the cornfield faster, harvests bigger lately.  
Clear out! Clear out, bring home the surplus!



III.

It won't do; it won't.

Passing side by side on this narrow rut of a path.

We need four lanes, not two. Just two paths for chrissake!

Other towns have four, six, some even eight! Eight lanes! Eight lanes!

They know how to get where they're going.

No more of this godforsaken gravel to dirty-up my car. Pavement! Pavement!

And the hills, what of this?

Having to go down a valley and up the side of that goddamned mountain!

An idea. Cut the mountain, use the dirt to fill the valley. That's it!

Clear out! Clear out, level ground!

Faster path to markets, find themselves out farther and farther these days, they do.

Need to get to the markets. Man's got to eat, you know.

Gotta buy food, gotta have clothes, tires for the car, sonsabitches wear out.

Hear the ones in Cincinnati last longer, gotta go one day.

Knock down the mountain, throw dirt, rocks, and grass into the valley. Fill it up!

Always the grass.

IV.

Grass! Grass in the goddamned median!

Holds up traffic, cars have to stop and turn.

Has to be mowed, gets out of hand. Need pavement.

Better off with pavement than this goddamned grass.

Pavement we have con-trol over.

Fill in the median and put in a turn lane.

Stop this holding up traffic.

Clear out! Clear out, get the people where they're going!

Better restaurants in Otherton.

Gotta get there. Gotta eat, you know.

Don't like doing it here. Nothing good, nothing good!

My right is to drive thirty miles to have a decent meal.

Don't want these cars in the way all the time, turning to the left.

If not for this grass. If only the pavement. If only con-trol -- If only con-trol!

Always the grass.

V.

Pavement. Yard's so small.

It's hard to tell where this goddamned road ends and the yard begins.

Need an overpass or something to get the traffic moving out of this area.

Noisy as hell in here, in my own yard.

Need a better road. Get the people out of here and where they're going.

People turning, stopping, always the traffic.

Never even know where the people are going anymore.

No time! No time, gotta move!

Farther, faster, better food twenty miles west of Otherton, you know.

Gonna drive out there myself someday.

If only I can get matters taken care of here.

Gotta chip up some of this pavement from the five surrounding feet of yard I

bought. Bought it from the state, I did.

It was a fair price.

Gonna chip up this pavement and plant some grass.

You know, some little something to separate what's mine from what's not.

Clear out! Clears out, make the boundaries clear - er!

Gotta get some grass to put in the yard.

Have to drive about ninety miles to get a good blend of seed.

Bermuda and Fescue blend, rugged, always be there.

Always the grass. Always the grass.

Least the roads are good. Make the trip fast, it will.

Make everything real efficient.

Cullman, AL  
January 1998



# to give, to receive

by Holly Dunlap

She cuddled him  
with the softness of a clam  
caressing an irritating piece of sand,  
ready to reform it into a pearl.  
He saw her in Venice.  
She was eating a peach  
on a park bench.  
They bet a rug that hung  
from their brass hat rack.  
They conjured feathers from their ears.  
The feathers were feathers of peacocks,  
their blue circles staring like eyes.  
They were blue-veined eyes.  
Elle a les cles.  
Keyholes made perfect ports  
for their souls.  
They docked their sea vessel  
in the port.  
She had gathered all the pearls she needed.

Night is falling. The gray-blue dusk creeps swirlingly around, covering the sinking fiery red ball in the west. Porch lights and headlights are coming on, first one, then another and another. The darkness seeps in along the ground; taillights become more visible.

There is a smallish white house set back a little from the road. A woman stands discreetly in the half-open screen door, watching. A couple stands on the edge of the porch, locked in a desperate embrace. Tighter and tighter they squeeze, until you can almost hear them gasp for breath. Just off the gravel driveway sits a silver car, engine running and lights on, with its chrome gleaming dully from the porch light. The car faces the house, and there is a figure in the passenger side, impatiently restless, yet understanding. Exhaust puffs out in quiet spurts from the tailpipe, and the figure shifts abruptly, causing the car to rock slightly. This seems to invade the close world of the couple on the porch, and they break apart, slowly, lingeringly, reluctantly. The last contact is broken as he slides his fingers out of her clinging grasp, and turns to walk down the steps. He looks back and says something to her. Her shoulders slump as she covers her mouth with one hand, then begins to shake with sobs. He walks to the car with a defeated air, pauses as he opens the drivers' side door, and looks back at her one last time. She is unable to take any more, and she rushes to him. He catches her in his arms, almost unwillingly, and holds her close a moment before gently disengaging himself from her. She looks up at him, her eyes shining with tears, and he kisses her softly on the lips, then her forehead. Then he gets into the car and closes the door. She stands unmoving as he backs down the driveway and disappears into the night. The woman in the doorway walks tentatively toward the younger woman in the grass.

She takes her by the hand, and leads her inside, closing the screen door quietly behind them. Her face is there, looking down the road, for an instant, and is gone. The porch light blinks off, and the sounds of night fill the space of dark.



by Kershaw Babers



# wanderlust

by Stephan Hartsfield

I remembered waking early on a cool November Sunday to the salty smell of frying bacon and the sound of Amazing Grace on the kitchen radio. The sunlight filtered through the curtains and caused an incandescent glow, like the light of a dimly flickering fire, to dance across the room. Little shadows hid timidly in the corners of the room like scared children hiding from "it" in a friendly game of hide-and-go seek. As the sleep began to melt from my eyes I heard a soothing voice from the kitchen announce "Wake up boys or you'll miss breakfast, and we can't have that can we?" Grandmothers always know what the important things in life really are.

As I sat at the breakfast table I could hear my grandfather mumble something about how his son-in-law, my uncle Leon, messed up the lawnmower he had bought from my grandfather a few weeks earlier. I never could really understand grandpa too well, he didn't have any teeth and he chewed a lot of tobacco, and these two facts combined made interpreting his sentences next to impossible.

After my dad had said the blessing, I reached across the table to grab a biscuit. Grandpa slammed his hand down on the table so hard that the silverware jingled like angry bells, and I almost chunked that biscuit right through the ceiling. Grandpa found this tremendously funny and began to belt out his hoarse, gasping laughter. I couldn't help but join in. Grandpa had arthritis pretty badly by this time and it was good to see that even though he could hardly walk he could still laugh. Long years of hard work break the body but strengthen the spirit. Few people realize this simple truth.

Aunt Francis asked my mother, Joyce is her name, to pass the chocolate gravy over. Most people think that smothering biscuits with confection sounds unappetizing, but it tastes like heaven. Southern cooking is an art, and my grandmother its Rembrandt. I remembered how she would spend hours in the kitchen, cooking and rambling on about who got married, who had a birthday, who died, and what the weather was supposed to be like. I wondered if anyone would remember me when I died, decided that they probably wouldn't, and focused on the conversation at hand. Francis ate slowly, pausing between sips of coffee and bites of bread to talk about church. I don't think I've ever met a more Christian woman. Fire and brimstone ruled her life, but sometimes she could surprise you with her understanding and wisdom. Few people ever realize what a true Christian is. Before long, my belly had been fattened by three biscuits 'n' gravy, two fried eggs, and several pieces of bacon. They tell me now that these things can kill you. All I know is that they kept us alive. Few people realize where food really comes from. You learn to appreciate what you have.

I walked back through the door joining the kitchen and the living room, across the soft brown carpet of the living room floor, to a door on the opposing wall. I remembered how long it took grandpa to make that trip, leaning on his walker and occasionally hitching his breath in pain. I wondered if he had ever been young, decided he probably hadn't, and entered the door into the hallway. I walked past the bathroom (it was on the left) to the second bedroom on the right. My parents kept the suitcase in the bedroom they used when we stayed with my relatives. I took out a pair of old jeans, a gray and black checkered flannel shirt, and an extra pair of socks. I dressed quickly, looking out the bedroom window at an unfortunate cardinal perched in an apple tree, the tips of his feathers ruffled by the wind. I wondered if the cardinal wondered what it would be like to drive a car, decided he probably didn't, and put my shoes on. I opened the closet door and grabbed the fleece lined denim jacket my parents had bought me for Christmas. It was about the warmest jacket I had ever owned. I remembered my dad saying that he didn't want me to get as cold as he did when he was a boy. Few people know what cold really is. He is a good man, my dad. Few people realize what being a man is all about.

I reentered the living room through the same hallway door and was greeted by the sound of "Danger, Will Robinson, Danger!!" The television was against the wall, to the right of the doorway I was standing in, and my brother was sprawled out in the middle of the floor with his eyes glued to the screen. I wondered if old people saw in black and white, decided they probably did, and lumbered across the room and back into the kitchen. I paused at the refrigerator to get a glass of water, and listened to my mom talk about what she and grandma planned to cook for lunch. My grandmother was behind me wiping off the top of the stove. I could hear the cotton cloth gently sliding across the polished steel, hissing like a tired snake. I wondered if grandmother enjoyed cleaning up as much as she enjoyed cooking, decided she probably didn't, and diverted my attention toward the window.

The window sat right above the kitchen sink on the back wall of the house. On the other side of the window was the back porch. I remembered eating fried chicken and turnip greens out there in the summer. I remembered how summer afternoons smelled sticky sweet with the fragrance of honeysuckle. I wondered if wet dogs thought that people smelled funny, decided they probably did, and focused my eyes on the countryside. The kitchen offered a fair view of the rolling pastures and beech hollows that tumbled softly toward the

east, where they eventually rolled into the rising sun. I wondered if my mom ever looked out while she was washing dishes and wished she could be somewhere else. She looked at me and smiled and I knew that this wasn't true. Few people realize the depths of a mother's love. She is a good woman my mother. Few people realize what sacrifice is all about.

I finished off the water, smiled back at my mom, and turned around. I waved to my grandfather, walked through the den, and exited the side of the house onto the carport, then out into the back yard. I faced eastward, closed my eyes, and breathed in the icy fingers of frosty November air. My lungs tingled softly, and as I exhaled, a cloud of vapor exploded from my mouth and dissipated slowly, wafting upward like a lazy melting cloud. The sun had peeked over the beech trees and painted their leaves with golden brilliance comparable to the grandest treasure possessed by the most noble of kings. A single sycamore tree protruded from the frozen ground like a ghostly finger pointing the way to heaven. I wondered if trees ever wanted to cut down men, decided they probably did, and looked up into the sky. I drowned in a sea of baby blue. A red-tailed hawk swam overhead and cried out to me about his empty belly. I saw him plunge toward the ground and his belly was empty no longer. I wondered if the hawk killed without reason, decided he didn't, and bent down to tie my shoe. Few people realize what death really is. It is the completion of life. The animals know this better than I. Few people realize how much there is to learn.

I began to walk toward the sycamore tree (it was about seventy-five yards away) and stared down at the crazy diamond glow of the frozen dew that encased almost every feeble blade of grass. I wondered if you get cold when they bury you, decided you probably did, and tried to put the thought out of my head. I climbed over the pasture fence and slowly made my way to the back right hand corner of the field. I could see the still waters of the pond, and the reflection of the beech trees greeted my eyes like the glowing smile of a friend. A few beech leaves floated on the surface of the serene circular pool, and it looked like they were lying on a mirror. I picked up a pebble, tossed it toward the water in a lazy arc, and wondered if the pond was showing me more than mere reflections. For a moment I thought I was looking into a different world, and I half expected the pebble to just keep falling until it hit the sky. I decided that if it kept falling, I would have to follow it. I was disappointed when I heard a gentle splash, and I wondered if the ripples knew where they were going. I wondered if they knew they would crash at the end, decided



it was probably better if they didn't know, and slowly pruned my eyes away from the settling water. Few people realize that you don't find direction, direction finds you. The distant lowing of cattle complaining about the lack of green grass awakened my ears and brought me back around to reality. I skirted the southern edge of the pond and began to walk along the far side, keeping the eastern edge of the fence on my right. I lazily strolled northward along the fence line, and I felt the pasture begin to rise gently, as if it was a tired bronco who forgot how to buck. I wondered if cows ever wanted to eat men, decided they didn't, and ducked my head against the biting wind. Cold tears began to pool in the corners of my eyes and chase each other down my cheeks. One made its way into the corner of my mouth and it tasted bitter. It made me wonder if this girl I once dreamed about ever dreamed about me. I wondered if she liked to pick wildflowers. I decided she probably didn't, and put my hands into my coat pockets. Few people realize that you don't find love, love finds you.

The wind suddenly ceased its attempt to freeze the marrow in my bones, and I realized that I had reached the hardwoods on the northern edge of the pasture. I crossed the barbed wire fence that separated the pasture and the trees, and a small rabbit exploded from beneath a pile of old cedar wood fence posts. I wondered if he thought I was trying to eat him, decided he probably did, and wondered what it was like to live in constant fear. I decided that I didn't want to know and raised my eyes to scan the tops of the white oak trees. I saw a squirrel leaping through the canopy like a gray phantom acrobat. I wondered how it felt to leap without wondering if you would fall, or about where you might land if you lost your grip. I decided that it must feel like the moment before you completely surrender to sleep, when everything seems distant and perfect. I smiled as the slinky daredevil ducked into the hollow of a dying oak tree and peered out at me with oil spot eyes, as if to curse me for disturbing his daily routine. Few people realize the virtues of solitude.

I turned left and headed west, descending slowly toward the creek bottoms. The wind began to pick up again and the dry rattle of the remnant leaves kept time for the murmuring water. I wondered if trees really make a sound if they fall when no one is around to hear them. I decided that they did, but I knew I could never prove that. Some points just aren't worth arguing, but that doesn't mean that a little heated discussion can't be beneficial. Few people realize that if you don't believe in something, you must believe in nothing.

I reached the edge of the creek and watched the water bounce merrily over the domed backs of the rocks. Sycamore leaves swirled in the current like valiant ships fighting a vengeful tempest. I thought they looked like drunken ballet dancers, spinning crazily to music unheard by human ears. I wondered if the leaves cared that they might eventually end up in a river that might eventually end up in an ocean. I decided that they were too busy trying to keep their heads above water to worry about such trivial things. Few people realize that the threat of immediate disaster masks the fear of impending doom.

I glanced back over my shoulder and was mesmerized by the patchwork of sunlight filtering through the trees and painting the ground with splotches of light. I remembered how my grandmother looked in the afternoon, as she sat with her back to the sun, patiently working on her patchwork quilts. I wondered if she complained when she used to pick cotton all day and pray for her children all night. I decided that she didn't, because the meek shall inherit the earth. I smiled and left the memory behind me, stretched my arms out to help me find my balance, and walked over the creek on an old river birch log that stretched across the rushing water. Few people realize that some bridges should never be burned.

I reached the far side of the creek and wondered how long it would take an ant to make the same trip. I decided it would take too long, and I put the thought out of my mind. As I began to ascend the hillside, I heard the roar of an engine and the whine of rubber on asphalt and became conscious of the fact that I had reached the road. A frown passed over my face and I guessed that it was about time to head for church. I wondered if animals thought about God, decided that they knew him better than I did, and wondered what man could teach me that nature could not. I decided that I would never know if I kept a closed mind, so I headed south on the road. I wondered if the highway really went on forever and if it would take you forever to travel it if it did. I decided that one day I would find out. Few people realize that you can always leave home, but home never leaves you.

The shoulder of the road was covered with gravel, and I could feel the rocks shifting under my feet, crunching loudly as if to complain about the unexpected strain they were forced to endure. I wondered if rocks felt pain, decided that they didn't, and tilted my face upward to look at the sky. To my surprise, a thin layer of cotton gauze clouds had been wrapped over me. I wondered if the sky ever bled, and decided that it did. Anyone who



has seen a late September sunset could testify to that, and I remembered the way the sun slowly drained away, flowing behind the western hills and clinging to the horizon with reddish purple fingers. I wondered if this girl I sometimes dream about ever watched the sun, decided that she probably didn't, and brought my gaze back to earth. Few people realize the poetry of a sunset.

I smelled the sweet aroma of burning oak and it served to bring me back around again. I noticed the chimney peering at me over the next rise, puffing gray blue smoke like a lazy dragon, and picked up my pace. I remembered when my dad and my brother and I went with my Uncle Leon and his oldest boy (Tony was his name) to cut firewood for grandma and grandpa. The buzz of the chainsaw pierced the early fall air like the hum of an angry beehive. I watched as the teeth of the saw bit into the wood and I thought it looked like a mechanical termite, eating what it wanted and spitting out what it didn't. I wondered if any owls used to live in that tree. Few people realize what a tree has seen. I was thankful that the tree had died so my grandparents could live. I wondered if you could see the stars in the city, decided you probably couldn't, and stepped into the northern corner of the front yard. Few people realize what it costs to survive.

I stepped onto the northern entrance of the driveway, and felt my shoes sink deep into the soft chert rock. The driveway circled around the back of the house (you could see the driveway from the kitchen window) and rejoined the road on the south end of the lawn. The house faced westward, looking out toward the road. The road divided the front yard from a sea of sagebrush that crashed into a wall of statuesque pines that seemed to be a million miles away. I glanced to my right and stopped in my tracks like a scared mouse trying to decide if he should run or stand his ground. I was hypnotized by the gentle voice of the wind as it whispered in my ear, and I drifted away. I saw how the breeze caressed the copper-golden sagebrush, causing subtle waves to flow across the surface of the billowy grass toward the mossy green trees. I thought of a girl I once dreamed about and wondered if she would save me if I was drowning. I decided she probably wouldn't, and blinked my eyes to clear my head.

I stepped from the driveway back onto the grass of the front yard, and wandered toward the southwest corner of the house. I thought about how green the grass was during the summer, and I thought about a glowing emerald, alone in the afternoon haze. I remembered how my cousins and I used to come out after dark and frantically chase after lightning bugs, greedily imprisoning

them in Mason jars in an effort to capture their brilliance. I remembered how badly I felt if I kept one in a jar too long, and wondered if bugs knew what a light bulb was. I decided they didn't, and began to trot. Few people realize what it means to burn deep inside.

The wind ceased whispering and began to moan. It sounded like an old man mourning the loss of his youth. I shivered and bolted toward the sliding glass doors that stared blindly out toward the road like glazed eyes. I wondered if my grandfather remembered how it felt to run, decided it would be sad if he didn't, and clenched my fists.

The warmth of the house had caused a sheen of moisture to form on the surface of the glass, allowing only a hazy light to filter through. I remembered how my grandfather used to sit in his chair and stare out through these doors, looking at the willow tree that draped its sullen arms over the entrance of the southern branch of the driveway. I wondered if willows really wept, decided that they did, and slowly ascended the cold concrete steps.

I reached the top of the steps, stopped, turned around, and breathed in the icy fingers of the cold November air. My lungs tingled lightly, and as I exhaled a vapor exploded from my mouth and floated away, wafting upward like a lazy melting cloud. I gazed out across the countryside, and then closed my eyes. The wind caressed my face and it felt like the hand of God. I remembered a girl I once dreamed about. I wondered if she would ever caress my face, decided she probably wouldn't, and gritted my teeth. Few people realize the rarity of passion.

The sound of hollow footfalls from inside the house brought me around again and I turned around and opened the door. I stepped inside to the smell of boiling corn and the sound of "The Old Rugged Cross" on the kitchen radio. I heard a voice announce, "Good gracious, son! You really should let someone know where you're going. You could get hurt out there by yourself. Go get ready for church now, hon." Grandmothers always know what the important things in life really are.

Few people realize the difference between loneliness and being alone.



# tuscan faces

by Laura Lewis Lanier  
watercolor monotype







## **seedlings turn over night to sunflowers**

by Laura Lewis Lanier  
collage and pastel





**untitled**  
by Eric Carter  
printed ink on paper collage

# louisiana

## sky

by Holly Dunlap

In Louisiana  
graves lie above ground,  
and my cousin,  
the bones and hair of a 22-year-old,  
is still in the casket.

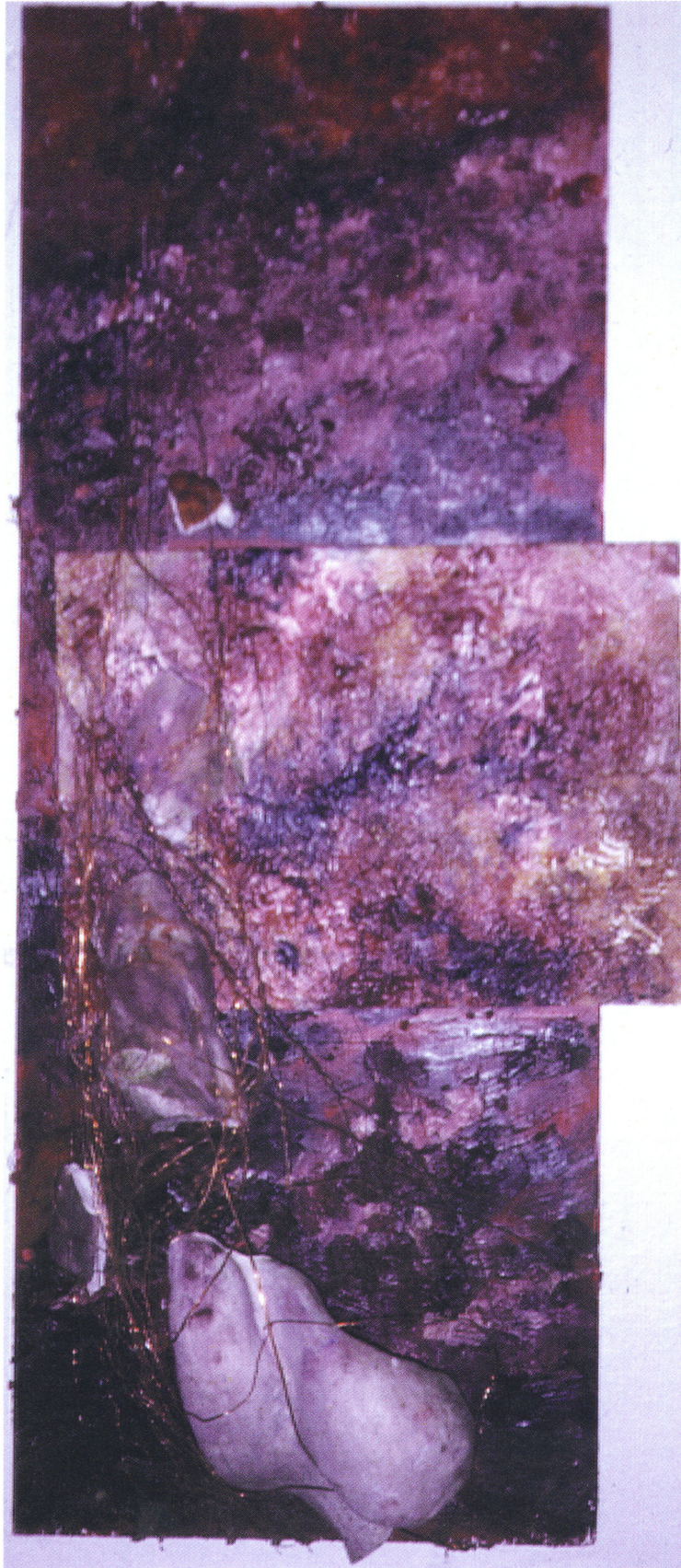
After his death  
his sister became bones, too.  
Her parents were so blown away  
with her brother's death,  
like a kite lodged in a tree,  
they didn't notice  
she was becoming a paper doll,  
ready to be blown  
into the white sky  
at any time,  
where staccato clouds  
dot the sky with anger.

*She's an English major that graduates  
this quarter. "I don't have anything  
profound to say about myself.  
Honestly, I'm just a silly girl who  
loves living alone. I have a cat  
named ketchup who plays with a  
paper bag. I'm happiest when I'm in  
the mountains."*

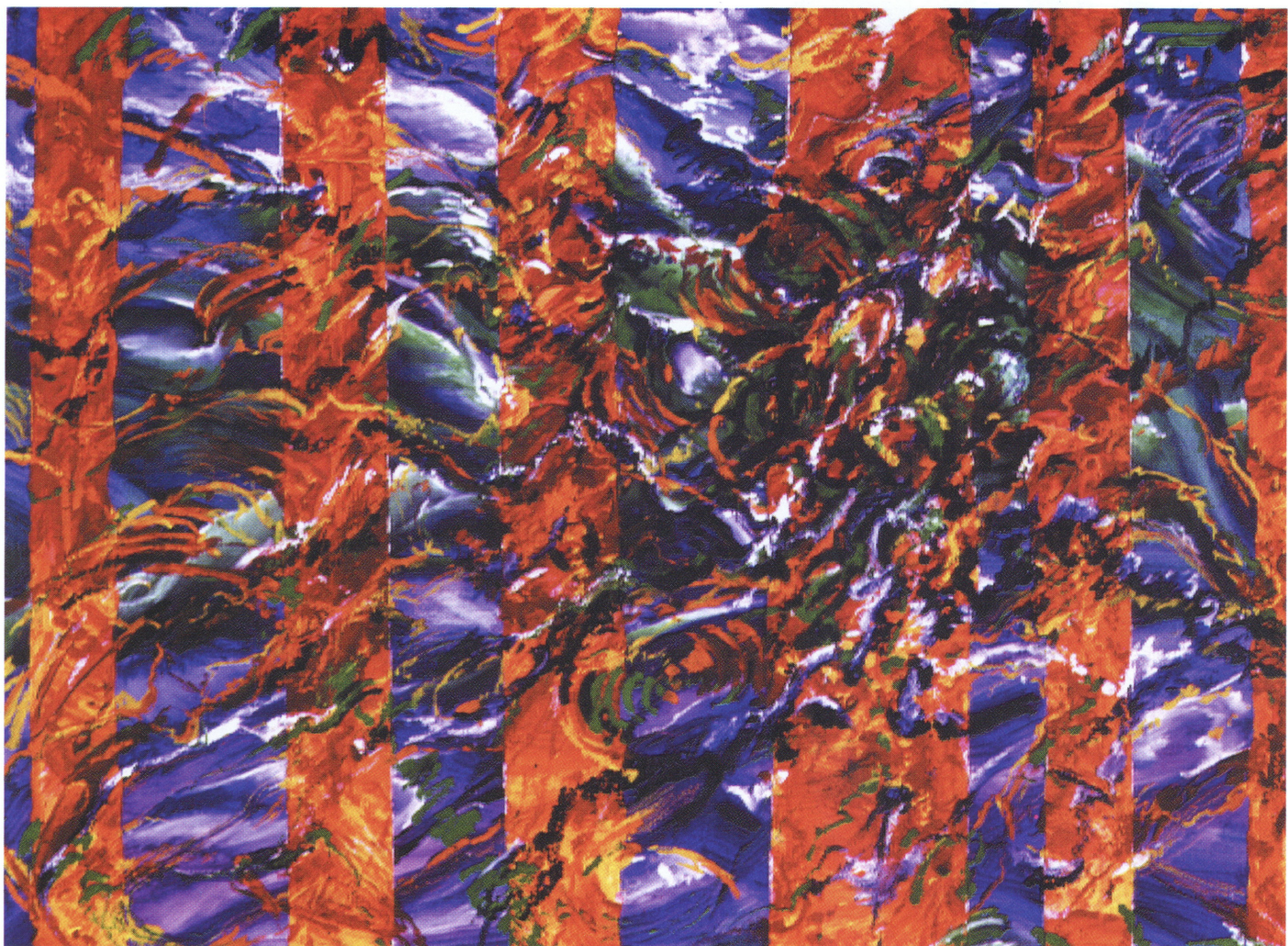


# untitled

by Greg Gamble  
oil and wire on wood collage







## **mixed emotions**

by Laura Lewis Lanier  
oil stick and acrylic on watercolor



# mein liebhaber

by Kelly Moon

the Sun is out again.

I lie on the seething pavement,  
inviting his fingers to crawl

between my toes

across my breasts

into my pores.

Sucking an ice cube to  
cool his luxuriance,  
his tentacles massage the warmth  
of potential energy that curdles  
within my chest.

Sweat trickles

down salty lips

down my flaming stomach

down and down and down

until I am rubbing my hands

over smooth, vampiress thighs,

clutching myself as he scorches

a shell into a fiend.

And today the Sun is mein Liebhaber.

*Kelly is majoring in playing the theme  
to the "Lone Ranger" on her teeth and  
German International Trade.*

# Wipplebee's world

by Michael Mark

Bartholomew Wipplebee exhaled routinely into the cold air and leaned his aged frame against the sturdy black scaffolding of his back patio. Patio... The word gave rise to wry smiles somewhere deep in the pulsing marrow of old Wipplebee, for in truth it was no patio at all, despite his once determined efforts to ignore that salient fact and maintain the illusion that a correlation indeed existed between the realtor's fuzzy literature and the living space his monthly check actually commandeered. No leaf-dead, red or green as his neighbor's garden hose- had been afforded any measure of privacy during his four month quest for a perspective from which the eight by four foot suspended concrete slab could somehow justifiably be referred to as a patio.

And as is so often the case in these personal vendettas against life as we know it, the operative word in his final report, had he thought to compose one, would have been 'fruitless'. The next would have been 'ludicrous,' its inclusion being necessary to describe the space's laughable appearance after the addition of furniture specifically designed for 'patios'. The furniture fit- assuming full closure of the sliding glass door was actually an amenity and not really a valid concern of the modern tenant. He had even gone so far as to wonder then why the capability of his sliding glass door to be shut completely had not shown up on the fuzzy literature's list of lovable qualities present in his new dwelling that he'd be sure to tell all his friends about.

The cold air began to chill the partially clad Bartholomew below his personally mandated level of acceptability, so he exhaled a final cloud of white vapor, savored the panoramic view of the adjacent high-rise matrix of numbered domiciles, and experienced the luxury of opening a glass door on rails once again. It just never failed to satisfy. The clock read three minutes after seven and the little red dot of clarification in the upper right corner of the electronic display spoke volumes with its silence. Time for breakfast.

He flipped on the radio and warned the orange whose life would soon be metamorphosed into God knows what once it hit his innards not to worry about what it heard. He didn't. For good measure, Mr. Wipplebee chased his orange down with a glass of water, a bagel with cream cheese, and a healthy handful of vitamins. Then, after outfitting himself properly for the day's affairs, he laced up his walking shoes and proceeded out into the dimly lit corridor, past the elevator, down the stairwell and out into the teeming streets to cast his lot with the rest of the world's that day.

Upon exiting his karma storage facility of choice, Wipplebee had the



presence of mind to turn right and thereby put the wind at his back. Mankind's still growing infrastructure had surely been carefully designed with a purpose in mind, a goal even, but he doubted if channeling arctic temperature gales down upon the good denizens of the place fell under the scope of the initial statement of intent. In medical terms, the situation would be dismissed as a 'side-effect,' a term far more appropriate to the concrete extension jutting out from the back side of his apartment than the unpleasant conditions of the city street down which he strode. He preferred to view things as he saw them, meaning the out of control foot pump exhaust simulation occurring daily on Fifth Street was not a side-effect, but a perfect example of the real, every-day problems abundant on the Earth's surface.

He knew his orange fur-lined hat replete with ear flaps and chin strap left a bit to be desired from the aesthetic perspective, especially when pulled down tight over his favorite wool cap in a decidedly asymmetric fashion per the dictates of functionality, yet it worked. This not only produced looks of ambivalence and confusion from the few other pedestrians, but earned the respect of the local cab drivers as well. If a man was to brave the unparalleled and still burgeoning rigors of his own infrastructure, the last thing he ought to hold dear is the assumption that a head is good for only one hat at a time. Cabbies learned quickly the service one could perform for oneself by discarding such nonsensical arbitration at the first available opportunity.

For example, traffic signals existed merely to suggest general guidelines, not to constrain individual expression and the power of free enterprise. Nothing burnt the wooden beads out from under a cabby faster than a fare upset with the methods employed to show them safely and expediently to their intended destination. The double standard implicit in such dissatisfaction is not only beyond the cabby's pre-allocated range of mental gymnastics, but the single greatest perturbation in the tranquil day that could very easily have been theirs. The rest of the day is spent in a long string of futile and angry exertions meant to somehow out-maneuver the gangly tandem standard. In Bartholomew they saw a man of seventy plus years who had undoubtedly dispensed with the juxtaposed niceties of the mad world. A man wearing an orange hat skewed on his head like an off-center pineapple on a first-timer's kabob didn't have room in his vocabulary for the word 'side-effect.'

The driver of cab number seventy-eight picked up Wipplebee at the corner of Duncan and Oliver, two blocks from his building. "Where to, pal?"

"The park on seventeenth. As snappy as you care.

I'm in no hurry on this one."

"You got it." And it was just that damn simple.

The actual content of Bartholomew's opening statement was not important in even the vaguest sense- what mattered was how he delivered it. For starters, he hadn't apprehensively qualified his desire with five or six half-muttered instructions on safety and navigation, and on top of that he had gotten into the cab like it were a machine with a human being at the helm. He'd seen how some folks got into cabs: like they were all chancy affairs at best, operated by ex-circus stunt men on the rebound. Cabbies could smell fear as well or better than most dogs and its discovery served only to inflame their current annoyance level. However, step in the vehicle with confidence, express an awareness of the possibility that human life inhabited the front seat, maybe even in a competent form, and the rest of the drivers in the city may as well wait their turn.

The one word term for that in Bartholomew's mind was respect. One word- but many unfolding meanings. The average infrastructure inhabitant fell sadly short of just reaching tier one: respect for the person behind the wheel. Of those who did, most were far too happy with themselves on this account, and were smiling broadly for the ever-present cameras. This sort of respect missed as much of the lonely point as it hit. The real respect which cabbies sought was of a more far-reaching variety, of the variety which simply visioned men like Wipplebee exuded in immoderate quantities. It was respect for the fact that whatever wackiness had enticed the primordial soup to such heights of achievement could sure enough give rise to just about anything at all behind the door of a cab. Or anywhere else for that matter. This sort of respect kept a man honest and on his proverbial toes.

It also exposed a myriad of hidden worlds within the world.

Wipplebee had it. Cabbies knew it. Wipplebee got where he wanted, and he got there first when he needed to. And he never complained about it later. It was just that damn simple.

He got out of the cab, leaving the ex-circus stunt man better off than he found him, and made straight for the park. He had to go nearly everyday, because each day it was a different park. Three hours later he found himself back on the same curb, full of thoughts on tree reproduction and the City Maintenance Department, and directly across the way from a woman inside the sleek cafe window in dire need of cross-examination from an unbiased outsider. A man on his toes could recognize these things. Before making his way across the street to perform his community service for the day, Bartholomew Wipplebee



took a moment to reconnoiter his surroundings. To his left, a pair of unruly heathen squirrels were turning a dormant hardwood into a fascinating rendition of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and doing things in the process which no fossil fuel to power converter could even comprehend attempting. To his right, a lone bush had decided perhaps prematurely that winter had ended as far as it was concerned. Bold, presumptuous even, but intoxicating. He wished the fellow luck. The sooner he could retire his orange hat for another season the better. He then proceeded to wonder exactly how far the concrete beneath his feet had shifted its global coordinates since the day before, but made it a point not to go out of his way in search of an answer. Overhead the sky was blue as the day it was born.

Bartholomew took a deep breath and prepared to get human on some folks. He crossed the street when safe to do so, and removed both layers of headgear upon entering the glass and steel building's first floor. The cafe was on the second.

He walked in unobtrusively and politely ordered what some would surely label a 'byproduct' of modern civilization as he listened to the full spectrum of ambient noises that assailed his ear in disharmonious unison. A man on his toes could do some wonderful things. One amazing novelty Bartholomew had noticed was that when entering public places, rather than immediately dismissing the background clutter as the same old recurring, generic, canned morass of interwoven sound, one could actually listen. He had discovered that each time it was different. Each and every time. This was called respect. This sort of thing could change a person. For example, it could turn his ears into auditory prisms. Then the oral chaos could be carefully dissected, each frequency distinguished from the others for careful analysis and study. So, without ever turning his apparently disinterested, every-man gaze from the chalk scrawled menu behind the counter, he could hear her voice. And the moment he heard it he knew his hunch from the naturally chilled opposite side of the polished glass had been correct. There was much to hear in her voice.

She was on the phone. The rhythm of her words was professional, full of business and purpose and pace. The words themselves flew quickly through the air and the phone, quite happy to be freed of her thoughtless drive. They were not happy words. They were words which had been taken for granted and pushed around and eventually shoved out of her mouth into space. The key, old Wipplebee felt, was the taken for granted aspect. Language was a wonderful opportunity, a quite brilliant gift to the world to which not one living soul could claim discovery or invention. Respect of the sort he sought to cultivate lent a certain awareness of these subtleties to a

person.

He listened further.

"-commodities. When will the ship leave port? Portugal?" Incredulity at this latest development. "Right, maybe we really should sell them... Tell them it must be by Tuesday... As soon as possible Edward. You know that... Right... Philadelphia I think. Possibly Newark. I fly in on the six forty... OK, see you then." She hung up and faded beyond the audible horizon.

He turned and carried his well jellied bagel over to her table. Quite secure in the fact that the shadow of any passing human which might fall upon her open folio was nothing but a brief and random encounter as its antecedent passed by en route to an available table, the woman failed to even look up for a moment. Bartholomew endured the brief pause patiently, easily pulverizing her first assumption with his unwavering presence. She looked up in uncomfortable surprise.

"May I?" he asked with a confident, bagel-laden gesture to the available chair.

Such was her surprise, she acquiesced unconsciously without having had the time to adequately position her defenses. Wipplebee slid like a liquid Slinky into the seat and extended his still sturdy hand. "Bartholomew Wipplebee. If your too pressed for time, Bart will do. You are...?"

"Kim Guildner." Quick as lightning on a hot day was what she was. Already recovered and then some. "What can I do for you?"

"Just have a question for you."

"Shoot."

"You looked around lately?"

"You get two questions, because I don't know what you mean by the first, Bartholomew."

"I mean there's lots of worlds Ms. Guildner. How did you pick yours?"

"And is it reasonable sounding to you when you think about it? What I'm saying is, do you put that business suit on because it's the best thing for business on this planet, or because no one can figure out what the hell else to do with their time in the morning? See, we get notions Ms. Guildner, and then we start getting notions all together, and then we have infrastructure, random ideals, mach five wind speeds on pedestrian walkways, and we forget that the guy loading your ship in Portugal may be a blossoming artist in need of free time and a thank you and that the planet actually turns on its axis. That's all I'm saying. How's the coffee?"

"It's good," she laughed.

"Good. See, it boils down to taking things out of context. Somewhere along the line, we must have decided that we were the context, or we just started making one up at any rate. How else do you explain things like corpo-



rate tax structures? What about speeding tickets? Or Federal Recommended Daily Allowances? A person actually sat down and came up with those figures on our behalf. And the scary thing is that he was probably using a slide rule. Isn't that a trip? That's what I mean by out of context. You start pulling figures like that out of the air and you're bound to lose touch as a nation. You just can't go around proclaiming stuff like that."

"So enlighten me then, Mr. Wipplebee. What is a girl to do?"

"Call it like you see it. And use your context clues. Trees go like this. They wake up and stretch out, you know, get the motor running. Then they just get right after it for a while. And then they slow down, relax, and unwind. And then they go to sleep. We call that a year. They give themselves about equal time for each stage. They still have plenty of time to produce a substantial GFP, Gross Fruit Product, and make lots of little trees. We go like this. We wake up on the fly, skip warm up, and then get after it 'til we pass out. We calculate our GNP ten different ways, and we don't know what to do with our little ones when we have the energy left to create them. See, that's not properly using the context clues. Everything we don't like we then dismiss as a 'side-effect'."

She gave his words some thought as she drained the last bit of coffee from her mug. Bartholomew took the opportunity to introduce his bagel and jelly to its new home. Long ago he had wondered off and on about living the side of life closer to death than to birth, and he realized that there were some things he could get away with that he never could before- like choosing worlds without the limitations of his dreams and sharing break-

fast on a whim with a complete stranger.

"Well I appreciate your time, Bartholomew. I must be off for my world. You are a very entertaining fellow, and you clearly are who you are."

"Thank you. Enjoy your day, Kim."

He consumed the remainder of his bagel eagerly, wished her good day as she departed for wherever, and considered the day a huge success already. Then he went home and stepped out onto the back forty. Once again the pigeons had taken advantage of his absence by peppering his slender railing with their recycling efforts- a definite context clue. How so finely tuned a delivery device could be packaged in such tight and unseemly quarters, and then be maintained on the gleanings of bread crumbs and acid rain alone was beyond Bartholomew Wipplebee, but it fit right into his world of choice. A 'side-effect' it was not. A call to respect is what it was, tier two respect.

Bartholomew Wipplebee didn't have even close to a patio, but he had what he had and he knew what that was and he liked it.

I lay to sleep in the heat of the night air  
I wait in expectation of a cool breeze  
The sweat that poured earlier  
stands dried against the darkness of my skin  
I swat all the while  
at the pestilence that flies by night.

## night air

by Jerome Strong

They swarm all around me as I wait  
as I wait for the cool breeze through the window  
A window lined with what used to be a screen  
A screen to deter  
the pestilence that flies by night.

My mind takes me on a journey  
I journey to a day filled with raindrops  
Cold refreshing raindrops  
I enjoy the cool stillness of the day  
My arm rests  
and with the stillness  
I forget that with the morrow hour  
would come the drip drip sound  
of the rain no more.

But still I lay, all except the arm that fans  
that fans my dark skin  
the skin laced with the sweat of the day  
Still I lay, all except the arm  
the arm that fans the pestilence  
as I wait for the cool breeze  
that graces my window  
in the heat of the night air.

*He is a senior in Microbiology and  
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He is from Phenix City, Alabama.*



# untitled

by Kelly Moon

last night?  
sculpted his graceful effigy  
from paper, flour and water;  
now I can hold him  
whenever I'm pleased,  
and burn him if ever I'm not

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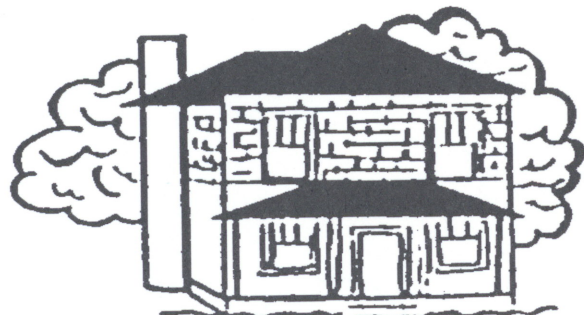
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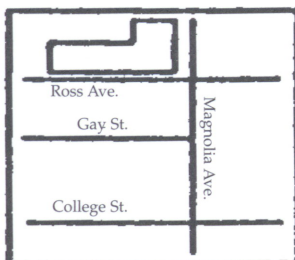
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